THE OFFICIAL

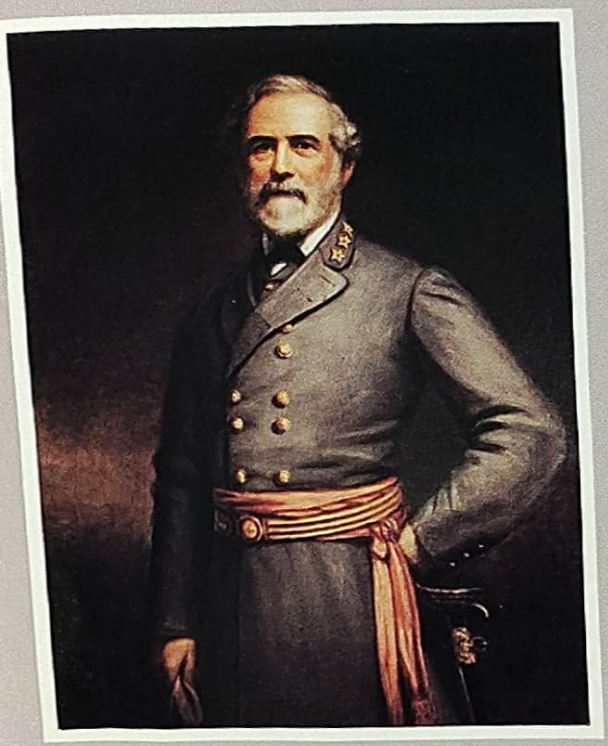
ROBERT E. LEE

COMMEMORATIVE PISTOL

Authorized by
The United States Historical Society

ROBERT E. LEE

Robert E. Lee (1807-1870)



Painting by Theodore Pine/Washington and Lee University/Lexington,Virginia

The son of Henry ("Light Horse Harry") Lee, Robert E. Lee, was born on January 19, 1807 at the family home in Virginia, "Stratford." When he was still an infant, the family moved to Alexandria where he received his early education, in school and in his father's well-stocked library.

Lee entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1825. He returned to it 27 years later as Superintendent. His service with the Army was spectacular – in the Mexican War, the Veracruz expedition, with the elite 2nd U.S. Cavalry in Texas and at Harper's Ferry. General Winfield Scott called him "the best soldier I ever saw in the field."

So highly regarded was he that when the War Between the States broke out, Abraham Lincoln offered Lee the command of all Federal forces. But he could not bring himself to "raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home." He resigned his commission in the army he had served so faithfully.

For the Confederate forces he became the brilliant strategist, always attacking in the unexpected way. He was also a tactful diplomat, keeping President Jefferson Davis informed of his plans and activities. But more than all this, he became the symbol of the Southern cause and was the object of hero worship among soldiers and civilians.

Lee was a man of strong religious conviction. He was scrupulously honest and seldom missed an opportunity to be a witness to his Christian belief.

After the surrender to General Grant on April 9, 1865 at Appomattox, Lee returned for awhile to Richmond. He received numerous offers for positions in industry but instead accepted the presidency of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University.

Historian James Robertson says he was "one of the greatest, if not the greatest, soldier who ever spoke the English language."

ENGRAVINGS ON CYLINDER

The cylinder of this Lee Commemorative Pistol has five engravings which depict important symbols in the life of Robert E. Lee. As the cylinder is rotated the details shown here are displayed.

Napoleon cannon used by Confederate forces. *Arlington, Lee's home.* *The Lee family crest.* *Robert E. Lee mounted on Traveler.* *McLean House, scene of surrender ceremonies.*

SPECIFICATIONS

Length: 13 inches
Caliber: .36
Weight: 2 pounds, 9 ounces
Engraving: 24-karat gold
Stock: walnut
Cylinder: six chambers
Frame and Metal Cylinder: First quality steel, blued
Trigger guard and Backstrap: Brass, plated 24-karat gold
Percussion Caps: No. 11
Gun Powder: Black powder only

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You are invited to examine the remarkable design and fine detail of the official Robert E. Lee Commemorative Pistol through this unretouched photograph.

R.L. Wilson, author of numerous books on antique firearms including *The Colt Heritage,* says the Lee Pistol is "a remarkable example of superb design and craftsmanship." The Florentine engraving design is after the design of the '51 Navy Colt Pistol of Robert E. Lee. It was presented to General Lee by Sam Colt and is now in the collection of the Confederate Museum in Richmond.

The name LEE is etched on the top of the barrel surrounded by laurel wreaths. The laurel wreaths are also engraved in gold on the two adjoining flats of the barrel.

On the side plate are etched three gold stars, for the rank of general.

Note how closely the engraving lines are etched to the edges of the metal. Only a handful of craftsmen in the world are able to achieve this technique.

THE '51 NAVY COLT

Samuel Colt designed the first '51 Navy in 1850. He sold them to both Union and Confederate officers and to customers in England, Canada, Austria and Australia. Nathan L. Swayze, the arms historian, calls it "one of the most graceful and beautiful of all Sam Colt's percussion pistols."

The '51 Navy became so widely used because it was so well designed and constructed. Like the Deringer, it was (and is) safe, easy to load and fire. But with six shots, the '51 Navy was better suited to battle.

THE POWDER FLASK

The James Dixon Company of Birmingham, England, provided Colt flasks for officers of the Confederate Army. The Society has arranged for the Dixon Company to provide the identical flasks for the Robert E. Lee Commemorative Pistols. This is the classic American Eagle flask, plated with sterling silver.

THE LEE MEDALLION

(OBVERSE)

(REVERSE)

Minted exclusively for this pistol, the Robert E. Lee Medallion was sculpted by Anthony de Francisci. His other commissions have included the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the U.S. Mint and the official Inaugural Medal for Ronald Reagan.

The 1½" diameter medallion, struck in sterling silver, shows Lee's head on the obverse (front) side. On the reverse side General Lee is shown mounted on Traveler. You will find the medallion in a special compartment of the American cherry case.

The same design has been struck in bronze and plated in 24-karat gold for the walnut stock of the Lee pistol.

THE DISPLAY CASE

Crafted of American cherry, the case has been designed to display and protect the pistol.

The lid is inlaid with genuine leather, gold stamped with a border design from the pistol engraving. Gold stamped in the center is the silhouette figure of General Lee on Traveler, from the famous photograph by Matthew Brady.

The case is lined in velvet, French fitted to accept the pistol and the powder flask. Corner compartments hold the lead balls and a box of percussion caps from the Williamsburg Firearms Manufactory.

RESERVATIONS

The Official Robert E. Lee Commemorative Pistol is available only through the United States Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

The United States Historical Society is a private, nongovernmental organization dedicated to historical research and the sponsorship of projects and issuance of limited editions chosen by the Society for artistic and historic significance.

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UNITED STATES HISTORICAL SOCIETY
First and Main Streets
Richmond, VA 23219

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